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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EUR/PGI FOR D. TESSLER
EUR/WE FOR C. JESTER AND S. HARTMANN
STATE PASS TO CEQ FOR G. BANKS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR C. CONNORS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES UNDER THE ITALIAN G8 PRESIDENCY

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - RELEASABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ITALY;
PARAS AS MARKED.

11. (SBU) Summary. Embassy and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff met with key Italian officials to review early ideas and plans for environmental issues under the Italian G8 Presidency, with particular reference to the G8 Environment Ministerial. Key issues discussed include: Ministerial location, format, agenda, possible outcomes, challenges and related meetings and initiatives. On climate change, the GOI is hoping for a newsworthy USG statement at the April 18-19, 2009 Environment Ministerial. The GOI understands that the new U.S. Administration will take some time to determine the details of its climate policy and team, but hopes that the July 8-10, 2009 G8 Summit (with a likely Major Economies leaders' meeting) can be an opportunity to "turn the corner" en route to the December 2009 UN climate talks in Copenhagen. The visiting EPA official also met informally with several faith-based leaders at the request of the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, to discuss opportunities for collaboration. End summary.

12. (U) On October 3, EPA Acting Deputy Director and Senior Advisor for the International Organizations Program of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) James Morant met with Italian officials to discuss plans for the 2009 G8 Environment Ministerial. (Mr. Morant serves as the U.S. National Focal Point for the G8 Environment Ministerial.) Key interlocutors included Environment Ministry Director General for Research, Environment and Development Dr. Corrado Clini and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) G8 Sous-Sherpa for Foreign Affairs Min. Guido La Tella.

G8 Environment Ministerial - April 18-19 in Sicily

13. (U) Environment Ministry Diplomatic Advisor Min. Antonio Bernardini said that the G8 Environment Ministerial currently is scheduled to take place on April 18-19, 2009 in Siracusa, Sicily, the hometown of Environment Minister Stefania Prestigiacomo (reached by air via Catania). The Ministerial will be held in an historic fortress overlooking the harbor, he said, so the meeting site itself will be very secure. The challenge, from the security perspective, will be moving delegates from their hotels to the fortress through the narrow streets of the old city, he said. DG Clini noted that some plans will need to be developed for the non-governmental organization (NGO) participants likely to be drawn by the event, and suggested that the Prime Minister's office may be working on that. He said that the first meeting of G8 experts/senior officials to prepare for the Ministerial likely will take place in February, on the margins of an OECD meeting.

Key USG Messages on G8 Environmental Issues

14. (U) In the meeting with Clini and Bernardini, and later at the

Foreign Ministry, the U.S. participants noted that the USG supports the Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa process and wants to ensure that it proceeds effectively. They added that: the USG is keen to work with Italy towards a successful Summit for Prime Minister Berlusconi and for the new U.S. President; that the USG is generally pleased with the results of Hokkaido Summit; that follow-through on promises is a key U.S. interest and the USG is eager to work with Italy to that end; that the USG is concerned that climate change has appeared to crowd out other critical environmental issues which deserve attention; and that the USG therefore would seek to ensure a balanced approach to the agenda, reviewing with Italy environment-related priorities for 2009 and beyond.

Ministerial Format: G8 + 5 + Egypt + possibly more

15. (SBU) Bernardini noted that the Environment Ministerial likely will include the G8 + 5 (Brazil, India, Indonesia, China, South Africa), as well as Egypt (first Arab country invited) and maybe some other Mediterranean countries. Other participants noted that international organizations would be invited, as appropriate to the final agenda. Noting that in Japan, many developing country participants had complained they were unnecessarily excluded from many events, Bernardini said that Minister Prestigiacomo is seized with the issue of making the Environment Ministerial better. He added that given the equality accorded to participants in the Major Economies (ME) process, maintaining all the G8 distinctions between G8 and outreach countries makes even less sense.

GOI Hoping for Newsworthy USG Statement on Climate Change at Ministerial

16. (U) Bernardini described Italy's "dual role" vis-a-vis climate change, as it seeks to maintain its position as a leading European Union (EU) member but at the same time also to negotiate with the

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U.S., China and India. Mentioning that he had met with representatives of both the Republican and Democratic campaigns while in Boston in September, DG Clini said he understood that it would take a while for the new U.S. administration to make any new policy decisions on climate change quickly. But, he expressed hope that the Environment Ministerial could be an opportunity for the U.S. to make some newsworthy statement of its views on climate change, "some movement forward." Mr. Morant noted that the Environment Ministerial will likely be the first trip overseas for the new Administration's EPA Administrator, so it could provide an opportunity for explaining the new Administration's views. Clini added that both campaign teams seemed focused on getting China and India on board with an agreement, and that they, therefore, were looking closely at technology transfer and technical cooperation issues. He noted Italy's long involvement in China in those areas, including building and supplying hardware and software for a key Beijing air quality monitoring station.

G8 Summit an Opportunity to "Turn the Corner" En Route to Copenhagen

17. (SBU) DG Clini added that the world "won't likely get a clear climate change policy at the 2009 G8 Summit; it might possibly happen at the United Nations (UN) climate negotiations in Copenhagen" in December 2009, but not likely before. (Bernardini interjected, with Clini's assent, that Italy did hope that nonetheless the Italian G8 Summit could be an important "turning of the corner" en route to an agreement in Copenhagen.) Clini suggested that the U.S. and Italy therefore use the coming year to work together in the areas of climate science and technology (S&T), where some progress can be made while policy issues are still being sorted out. He noted that the U.S. and Italy can work together in the G8 format, and also on low-carbon society issues. On the relationship between the Environment Ministerial and the Major Economies (ME) process, Clini said that there won't be any action items flowing from the Ministerial to the expected ME leaders' meeting to be held along with the G8 Summit; the ME process will be separate. Similarly, DG Clini mentioned that there will be one or two international meetings on bioenergy issues between now and the G8 Summit; the results of those meetings will go directly to the

Summit text negotiators, rather than through the Environment Ministerial, he said, since the Global Bioenergy Partnership was a G8 Summit initiative.

Foreign Ministry Seeks to Include Emerging Economies, NGOs in G8 Process

¶8. (U) In a meeting with MFA Sous Sherpa Guido La Tella and his staff, La Tella stressed that Italy supports the Heiligendamm initiatives and the ME process as ways to include emerging economies more in the G8 process. He said Italy believes that the emerging economies must be involved more than they were in Japan, and that this requires more time for them at the Summit. He explained that somewhere on day two or on the morning of day three of the three-day Summit, there would be an ME leaders' meeting (assuming circumstances still call for it by spring 2009). He noted that the MFA tries to have a lot of interaction with non-governmental organizations, with the aim of being more inclusive; this attitude also applies to the G8. Mr. Morant noted that G8 engagement with NGOs had evolved from a separate seminar at the 2001 Trieste Environment Ministerial to the current practice, in which civil society and international institution participants sit in on the meetings themselves.

GOI to Host 2009 ME Leaders Meeting, Provided that the ME Process is Bearing Fruit

¶9. (SBU) La Tella said that at the 2009 G8 Summit, Italy would plan to have a "full Major Economies Meeting (MEM) session, provided that the process continues and will be bearing fruit." He remarked that "The MEM was created to overcome U.S.-European divisions on climate change; the issue can't be solved without India, China and Brazil." He said that "Italy was supportive of the MEM from the start, and is still supportive." He flagged Italy's willingness to host a Major Economies negotiators' meeting "in the first part of the Italian G8 Presidency...if need be." (The Italian G8 Presidency runs from January to December 2009.)

Climate Change Among "Inescapable" Summit Topics

¶10. (SBU) La Tella listed the four topics from which the 2009 G8 Summit "cannot escape" as: 1) Financial crisis, 2) Poverty/Development/Africa, 3) Food Security and 4) Climate Change. Of these, he termed climate change the "most frustrating" issue he has had to deal with as Sous Sherpa, saying that "the breakthroughs

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so far, while not insignificant, have not been major, either." He added that "Italy is willing to put it at the top of the agenda, provided...the required convergence of views" exists - but noted that it "isn't there yet." La Tella said he didn't know if there is enough time to resolve the issue by the UN meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009. Given the change in the U.S. Administration, the USG will require a few months to settle its new policy, he noted, concluding, "It's too early for the G8 Summit to produce major, major results [on climate], but we can try to use it to give an impulse to the process, as a stepping stone."

Environment Ministerial and G8 Text Negotiations on Separate Tracks

¶11. (U) La Tella foresaw discussion possibilities only for two or three environmental topics at the Summit, including climate, and possibly biodiversity and/or forests as the other. The MFA was particularly interested in the forest topic, and was studying it to see if there were appropriate Summit action items in that area. Both Environment DG Clini and La Tella noted that the G8 Environment Ministerial and the G8 Summit text negotiations are on separate tracks, and that there will not be an input channel from the Environment Ministerial to the Summit track. La Tella confirmed that the Environment Ministry would have the lead on organization and text negotiations for the Environment Ministerial, as will other relevant Italian ministries for the other sectoral ministerials. He encouraged the U.S. to exchange views with Italy as to which issues the Environment Ministerial should focus on, and which the Summit should focus on, holding that there should not be a full overlap between the two.

Potential Environment Ministerial Topics - Climate, Biodiversity + What?

¶12. (SBU) Diplomatic Advisor Bernardini said that they were forwarding possible Environment Ministerial topics to Min. Prestigiacomo, and were open to including new topics in addition to climate change, especially topics on which something enduring can be built. Biodiversity was of particular interest, he noted; one possible topic in that area was access and benefit-sharing (ABS). SCICouns commented that if the GOI were looking for an "easy win," ABS certainly would not be one, and that it would entail the involvement of many USG agencies in addition to EPA. Other possible topics that Bernardini mentioned were the "3R" (reduce, re-use, recycle) initiative; environmental governance; how to move cities toward more sustainable energy consumption; oceans and marine protected areas; and trade and the environment.

¶13. (SBU) Environment Ministry expert Federica Fricano noted that there is a campaign to involve city mayors in sustainable energy efforts (e.g., congestion charges/traffic restrictions), which already includes 14 cities; the Ministry is the "focal point" for Europe in this campaign. One idea would be to involve additional cities, perhaps through a "twinning" program. Mr. Morant suggested that there might be action items from previous G8 Future Forums which could be highlighted at the 2009 Environment Ministerial, thereby increasing follow-through and accountability in the G8 process.

Clini Calls for Renewed U.S.-Italy Cooperation on Climate Change S&T

¶14. (U) Clini said that he hopes to breathe new life into the bilateral climate S&T partnership between the U.S. and Italy, which is coordinated for the Italian side by the Environment Ministry-supported non-profit Euro-Mediterranean Climate Change Center (CMCC). He noted the December 1, 2008 conference being organized jointly by his directorate, the Embassy, the Italian Foreign Trade Institute and CMCC, titled "Leading Low-Carbon Technology in Italy and the U.S.: Moving Research from the Laboratory to the Market," and suggested that one or two of his counterparts from the State Department and/or EPA come to Rome on December 1, to help him open the event. That would provide an opportunity for a bilateral meeting on the margins, in which the U.S. and Italy could discuss plans for the G8 Environment Ministerial, as well as for the UN climate change negotiations opening that day in Poznan, Poland, he said. (Note: While Post would welcome State and/or EPA participation in the December 1 event, Post understands that the difficulties of travel to Poznan may make that infeasible. Perhaps another alternative would be a bilateral U.S.-Italy meeting with DG Clini in Poznan. End note.) Clini added that it could be useful to "reinvigorate" participation by the U.S. State and Energy Departments in the Environment Ministerial.

G8-related meetings in Mexico City and Parma

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¶15. (SBU) Environment Ministry expert Fricano mentioned that on November 20 a seminar will take place following up on a Japanese G8 initiative to encourage information-sharing at the city level on promoting the transition to a low-carbon society. She said that the meeting will take place on the margins of a meeting of mayors and other leaders of Latin American cities; the Japanese will attend, and will propose the idea of a network of scientific institutions working on low-carbon-energy issues, which would include developing country institutions. Mr. Morant noted that he was not sure that the U.S. would participate in the event, since another meeting in that area might not be productive. He added that a letter was in draft explaining the U.S. views in more detail. Bernardini separately mentioned that at the suggestion of Under Secretary to PM Berlusconi Gianni Letta, Italy will host a G8-related Environment and Health Conference in November 2009 in Parma (the site of the EU's European Food Safety Authority), and would seek participation in particular from the U.S., Japan, and Russia.

Meeting at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See

¶16. (U) Embassy Vatican hosted Mr. Morant and representatives from the Holy See and Catholic religious orders for a round-table discussion on environmental issues on October 3. Roundtable participants included representatives of the Franciscan, Jesuit and Dominican orders, as well as the two Rome-based international associations of male and female religious orders representing some one million brothers and nuns. Participants shared their environmental priorities and gave examples of initiatives in multilateral advocacy, education and practical projects throughout the world. Mr. Morant outlined U.S. engagement at the multilateral and bilateral levels, emphasizing U.S. concern for the long-term global impact of environmental policies. (Note: Recent statements by Pope Benedict XVI and senior Vatican officials underline that the environment is becoming a priority on the international agenda for the Holy See and the Catholic Church. End note.)
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